Tape: 012

Speech by Farrington R. Carpenter

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SPEECH BY FARRINGTON R. "FERRY" CARPENTER

[Recording of speech from 1974(?) in Grand Junction, Colorado, presumably for the 40th Anniversary of the Taylor Grazing Act, possibly recorded by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This recording was included with the BLM Oral History Project tape collection]

Well, I feel like the man from Mars. How did I ever get in here? What have I been listening to this morning? What is this problem that brings you here and furrs your brow when you think about it? I don't belong here but 40 years ago to a day I belonged very much here in Grand Junction. Because I was the first being ever held under the recently passed Taylor Grazing Act to see whether they could put the show on the road or not. I got my appointment on September 7th; on the 12th I was here with no instructions what to do and this is what I found. Grand Junction was packed with stockmen. The cattle boys had their LaCourt Hotel, and the wool growers had the Harp Hotel. And they wouldn't speak to the other. There were so many of them the next morning when you began to look around for a hall, you couldn't begin to get them any hall. They generally went out on the city park here and took over the exhibition building. The cowboys sat on one side of Frank Delany and the sheepherders on the other with Dan {**Ulze**} and Molson McCarthy. And we got open and ready for business like a peace talk between two nations that had been fighting. And they had been fighting. And I knew they had been fighting.

What were they there to talk about? Why did Congress wake up and say they should have to drag grass into the conservation program? They had put water in under the Reclamation Act, put trees under the Forest Act, put minerals and _____ under the Minerals Reserve Act but not the grass. Everybody can get the grass if you knew how to get it. All of a sudden, they passed the Taylor Grazing Act. The boys out here didn't know the Act existed. But they were there to see that they got their share of the grass and there was two factions and there were ready to continue the war they had been having for 50 years to fight over it. That's the wool growers and the cowboys.

I didn't get any help from Washington what to do. There wasn't anybody in the whole Department knew which end of a cow got up first. I went to the Land Office. I said you want me to straighten out this land, give me a map of it. Well, we haven't got any maps. They're filing on it day and night all over, 27

local Land Offices, we haven't got any maps. Well, how in the hell can I find the land if I haven't got a map? That's for you. That was for me. So, when I came here, I said I'm supposed to set up grazing districts. I don't know whether you want them or not. And I wouldn't know where they go and Washington doesn't know where they go and nobody knows where to go but you fellers been fighting over this thing, you know, every blessed acre there is. And the poorer the acre, the harder you fight for it. I found that out, too. But I had one little piece of advice that I followed. And I'm going to follow it today until the end of my days. And it is a little saying by Justice Cordova on the Supreme Court, "When the task is to clean house, it is sensible and usual to first consult with the inhabitants." Well, they were the inhabitants. Cowboys sitting ready to jump and the sheepherders ready to jump. Everybody at each other's throat. But they were the inhabitants.

Well, they read a message from President Roosevelt. He said it was a great day for the West. Read a message from Secretary Ickes. He said he was the Lord's anointed. And then we got down to business and they began asking me questions about the Act, how near was near. I didn't know how near was near. I didn't know the answer to them. But I did know what to do with them. So, I said all right, you will go out there and caucus and pick five men to speak for you. You cowboys do the same. We'll adjourn this meeting at 12 o'clock and come back at 2. Here's a map of Colorado, here's some crayons, mark out those districts if you want them. If you don't want them, write out on it we don't want anything to do with you. Okay. We adjourned. Come back at 2 o'clock. And the mystery had been solved. The thing they said that couldn't be done. You couldn't make a cowboy and a sheepherder sit down and talk sense in the same room and agree on a sensible outcome. But they did. They marked it all out. Those Districts are just as they remain today. They know where the steep mountain roads you couldn't get over. They know where the water was, the know the dry gulch, they knew everything about it. I began to see who could make this law go. Just these fellas right here that knew what they were talking about.

The Act said the secondary can make agreements with local associations. I didn't like those associations. They're dominated by wealthy people, by people who don't run on the range. The people that run on the range are a whole different set of, a whole different crew. They're the range stockmen.

So, I decided right then and there they'd elect the people. And we would listen to all the big world growers and big American national, and all the rest of them. But just listen with our ears. And we'll let these fellas out on the range say what they wanted. That's what they call the District Advisory System. Don't think Washington took that laying down. Oh boy when we inaugurated those rules and sent them back, it created a commotion. So much of a commotion that when we went into gear and when 36 Districts were formed and the temporary licenses were accepted and acted upon and the temporary licenses were issued, in 15 months the whole 36 in 9 states, Arizona came in the next year, were complete.

Nowhere in history has any federal reservation been organized like that. And only three appeals to the Secretary. These boys took it. Why did they take it when they wanted more grass? Because they couldn't go up against the local board and lie like they could if they was signing an affidavit to go to the General Land Office. We put them on the spot, and they had to take it. And it was very popular with Congress. Oh, Ed Taylor, bless his old heart, you know. He stood up in Congress and he says, we got home lo on the range and that went over good with Congress. Went over good with us too. Didn't go over good with Ickes, didn't go over good with the bureaucrats. And after we got them all set up and going down in New Mexico, got a telegram to report to the Secretary and I walked into his office a day later and he says, you're fired. Okay. Said I didn't have to have the job, but I said, Mr. Secretary, you got a setup you can't bust. He says, I'll see about that.

So, I went home to the hotel and packing my suitcase to go home, and Oscar Chapman called me up and he says, Oscar was popular at the White House, Eleanor liked him, and he used to go over there a lot and called me up and he says, where you going? I said I'm going home. He says, don't do it; I was over at the White House last night and the President's Office is flooded with telegrams from largely the wool growers. I was surprised at that, saying they better keep doing it. They'd all vote the other way. And Franklin knew all about that voting business and so he immediately told Ickes, you take that coon back again. So, the next morning, I call the Secretary's Office and the old boy said he'd been thinking it over and he decided he liked me a lot better than he did before and would I stay a little. So, of course, I ought to have called him, you lying son-of-a-bitch, you can't get along with me at all. But I didn't. I stood it

out for four years and it's no easy job to do when your boss is trying to {**four foot**} {forfeit??} you every time you turn. But you got there. But I had the backing of the stockmen, and I had the backing of the Western press. And I had the backing of the Western Congressmen. And, boy, we went to town. Gene {**Achess'**} father was the chairman of the board in Montana, and we invited all these chairmen, the sheep and the cattle chairmen, to come to Washington, and they came. And Mr. Ickes had to come in and tell them what a swell bunch they was. I thought his face would break when he did that. And, we had to go over to the Oval Office, that Oval Office you've been hearing about that was just cleaned out the other day.

Well, we went over there to see Franklin. And you know, I'll never forget because Ickes. Franklin is a smart boy and he said, I want to shake hands with every one of these wonderful gentlemen that left their homes and are devoting their energy to solve this public range question. Said I want all of them to come up here and I want to shake hands with them. Well, Ickes didn't know any of them, so he says, well, Ickes, you come up and introduce them. And I did. And I want to tell you when Franklin took your hand in both his hands, you melted. Right then. And as we walked out, one fella from there, I remember he said, I've been a lifelong Republican, but nobody can stand up against that fella.

Well, now, I just give you that little background. You boys you've got a problem. You range stockmen are in deep water. You're walking around and you don't know where you're going to get, and you're outnumbered about 25 to 1 because as a new idea has come into the world that all public resources belong to all the people of all the United States. And if that is so, the gold in Fort Knox belongs to all of us and I'm going down there and get a little chunk of it myself. My banker can use it. And the military supplies and other things belong to all of the people of all the United States. Are we going to run the government like that? Why that would be anarchy. This government is run by Congress. And Congress makes its selections. And Congress made the selection on the public land in the Taylor Grazing Act and said it was to rehabilitate the land. That takes money and brains and a little work. And to stabilize the livestock industry dependent on public lands for their use. That stands on the statutes today, that is the law, and every federal judge will have to enforce it.
In the meantime, these people come along, and they say that

public lands belong to all the people of all over the United States, the little barber in Delaware would like to have a little house site out here just as well as anybody and why should you let these stockmen walk off with all the grass? And then we've had this great upsurge of, that we've been hearing about here, of everybody is going to analyze this thing and tell us what to do. As long as we are a democracy, Congress will say what to do and they say how to do and how do they do it. Who, if the range stockmen are going to get the public lands, why there was twice as many as we could support on the public lands. How are we going to say which part of the range stockmen would get the public lands and which one would be turned back at the gate. Section 3 of the Act said, Coverage in the issuance of grazing permits is given to those that have got private lands whose property you see acquires the public lands. They got it, just about a third of the rangemen got a right and it increased their value, and you know what it's done to you. It's helped stabilize the business. But they went right on, a great many people didn't hear that, and they didn't get the message and they said it belongs to all the people of all the United States and so these, the Act said, had three objectives. One rehabilitate the range. One stabilize the western livestock industry. Third other purposes. What are other purposes? Well, we got some **{BREAK IN TAPE}**

The critters off of them and protected them. The only reason we have any wildlife on the ranchers is the best friend they ever had. That was another resource. We immediately recognized them, put a wildlife man right on all our committees and everything. And what were the other purposes? Well, there are just as many other purposes as there are people who can stand up on their legs and say what they want to do. They want to put up windmills, they want raise daisies, they want to do a whole lot of things, you name it. But you've got to come back to the old man Taylor Act. And what does it mean.

Now, I feel like I've been talking 40 years ago. That's the way I talk to these dudes 40 years ago. But now, 40 years has passed, and this world is entirely changed from what it was when I was in Grand Junction, just 40 years today. What have we got? Conventional weapons are out the window. Nuclear power rules and we've come to a stalemate. What's left is going to rule is energy. What is energy? Well, coal, oil, food. Where do we stand on energy? Well, we're short on oil, ain't we? Arabia's got most of it. Well, we're a little long on food, aren't we?

Canada, United States, big exporters feeding the world. What have we got to save to keep our sovereignty? We've got to save our position as surplus food makers and we can trade with these fellers. And we've got to keep our cards close to our belly when we trade. We got to know what we're doing. If it comes to a showdown, a man's got to eat before he turns on the electric light. Eating is fundamental and as a part of the food production of the world, the range stockmen, the people using public lands, hold a key position. They're an integral part of it. And if they will show their position, they will be protected by Congress, they'll be protected by public opinion because you want to eat even if you don't have gasoline for your car. And when the people that produce this energy, food energy I'm talking about, when they will state their case before the people the way it was stated here today for everything else in this _____ chart showing all the nice little things that could be done, why not put it out here that the Taylor Grazing Act is here to protect a segment of our food producing part of the United States which is the playing cards that we deal in world politics today. And it will, the only thing that will preserve our sovereignty.

What's some of these nations that haven't any food producing capacity? Japan, England, Switzerland. Switzerland, the smallest ____ in the world. Switzerland subsidizes their farmers way ahead of what we ever thought. You realize that if you were over there and you was in a town, you could get $300 a year subsidy for just having one milk cow to pump twice a day. Why do they do that? The Swiss government knows if they lose their capacity to feed their people, their sovereignty disappears. They'll go down the sump hole of the European politics. Every nation knows now that its sovereignty depends on its food. Mr. Hoover said food would win the war. Food will not only win the war, a specific war, but it will win the long war that goes on for the people on this globe to live. And you gentlemen hold a key to it and the key to it is that so far in legislation is the Taylor Grazing Act. Now let me go back 40 years.

After four years of setting this thing up, Congress was afraid of Ickes and afraid he'd can me again, so they made it a Presidential appointment with the Senate confirmation. And the old boy couldn't kick me out. So, he sent me in and said would you like to go. I said would you like to have me. Oh God, he said, you're a pain in the neck. So, I said, well, I'm ready to

go back. My little farm needs me. What are you going to do with the Advisory Board? He says, I'll put them where they belong. Okay. Came to Denver. Met a Committee of the District Advisors. What's going to happen to us. I said you're on the way out. The old boy's going to can you. Now they didn't sit around and listen to a whole lot of hoopla about what was going on in the government and how they was going to figure you all out where you'd be taken care of. They made a committee up. {**Dean Brownfield**} was the chairman of it. They went to Washington, and they said, we want these boards set in by law. And they did it. And it's there. And every federal judge in the United States will uphold it. And all these birds talking about shelving it and everything, they haven't read their law. They can get right there and maintain their positions and furthermore, Section 18 of that law says the Secretary of Interior can't do anything with Grazing Districts until it has been proposed by a District Advisory Board. Now, that's just plain law. I just want to remind you of it because while you're badly outnumbered, terribly outnumbered right here in this room, and you're wading around in deep water and don't know where the hell you're going most of you, but nevertheless, you have this constitutional right and you've got your, the Congress will go with you. They're composed of people that take practical views and most of them don't know anything about the range country, but they've got a little drainage problem in Mississippi or somewhere and they'll trade off with it, fellas in the dry country, and you can be protected. But there's only one way that you can do it. You've got to have a little more public information about who you are and what you want.

Well, they came out to see me here a little while back from Florida, his father had sold out, he had his saddle bags full of money and he was going to buy a ranch in Colorado. That's a great place, you know, to make an easy living in the livestock business. And I took and showed him an awful good ranch, just what he wanted. Improvements were fine, the meadows was great, the cattle were wonderful. He had the dough ready to go. Said to the fella, now you make me a deed to this. Well, he says I've got a forest permit here. It's good beginning July 10th ’til September 18th. I've got a Bureau of Land Management fall and winter pasture out here and I leased some state land. He says, what's that you're talking about? I never heard of it. He says I get fee simple title to what I buy, or I don't buy. And he turned and walked away. Those fellas don't know how we live. They don't know anything about this western land country.

We've got to, you've got to show people what you've got and where you sit and your importance in the food problem which is the trump card of the United States for future development.

Thanks, and I didn't run over my time either.